

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY ARA:HARYAN:JLP

APPROVED BY ARA:WDROGERS

S/S: FVORTIZ

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY FLASH

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 158604 TOSEC 050141

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PN, PFOR

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM: PANAMA; POSSIBLE UNFORTUNATE
REPERCUSSION OF MIAMI HERALD STORY (S/S NO.)

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

PLEASE DELIVER AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE

1. TOMORROW'S MIAMI HERALD IS SLATED TO CARRY A STORY ON
THE PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS BASED ON KNIGHT NEWSPAPER'S
GAILEY AND BOYD INTERVIEWS WITH SOURCES IN DOD, STATE
AND RON NESSEN AND STAFF (THE LATTER ARE IDENTIFIED AS
QUOTE WHITE HOUSE SOURCES UNQUOTE IN STORY). THESE
LATTER QUOTE SOURCES UNQUOTE ARE ALLEGED TO HAVE SAID THAT
TREATY WILL NOT BE INITIALED BEFORE OUR 1976 ELECTIONS.
THE STORY WILL INDICATE THAT THE PRESIDENT IS FULLY AWARE
OF THE U.S. POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE TREATY AND WILL
NOT APPROVE ANY TREATY WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS A
SELL-OUT. IT FURTHER STATES THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOT
UNSYMPATHETIC TO CONSERVATIVE FEELINGS WITH REGARD TO THE
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CANAL.

2. GAILEY ALSO TOLD ONE OF OUR OFFICERS THAT OFF-THE-RECORD HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE WHITE HOUSE HAD A LENGTHY MEETING IN RESPONSE TO THE SNYDER AMENDMENT AT

WHICH TIME THE DECISION WAS MADE TO IGNORE THE QUOTE TOUGH UNQUOTE LINE RECOMMENDED BY YOU. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THIS WILL BE USED IN STORY.

3. PRESIDENT TORRIJOS IS ALREADY APPRISED OF THE STORY AND HAD SENT US WORD THROUGH HIS WASHINGTON AMBASSADOR THAT HE REALIZES THAT, WHILE YOU AND THE DEPARTMENT ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE, HE CONSIDERS THE STORY FROM THE WHITE HOUSE A QUOTE DELIBERATE PROVOCATION UNQUOTE AND CANNOT GUARANTEE AGAINST THE OCCURENCE OF QUOTE UNFORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES. UNQUOTE

4. WE HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING THROUGH SCOWCROFT TO OBTAIN A CLARIFICATION FROM THE WHITE HOUSE WHICH MIGHT MODIFY THE IMPACT OF THIS STORY. SO FAR, ONLY A REPLY FOR USE IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE WHITE HOUSE.

5. WE HAVE ALERTED OUR AMBASSADOR IN PANAMA. JORDEN, WHO HAS TALKED WITH TORRIJOS ON THE STORY, FEELS THAT IT WILL HAVE MUCH MORE IMPACT THAN THE SNYDER AMENDMENT, AND COULD LEAD TO REAL TROUBLE. ANY SERIOUS CONFRONTATION IN PANAMA, IN TURN, COULD WELL BLOW OUR CHANCES FOR WORKING OUT AN ONGOING NEGOTIATING STRATEGY AND MIGHT INSPIRE A MOVE AGAINST TORRIJOS HIMSELF, WHO, AS IT HAPPENS, IS PLANNING TO FLY TO MEXICO TOMORROW TO VISIT ECHEVERRIA. JORDEN IS PREPARED TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON PRESENT STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS IF CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT.

6. AS SOON AS STORY IS OUT AND WE SEE FULL TEXT AND APPRAISE ITS EFFECTS, WE WILL BE BACK TO YOU. SISCO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, TOSEC, NEGOTIATIONS, INTERNATIONAL CANALS, ELECTIONS, CAT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE158604
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: HARYAN:JLP
Enclosure: TOSEC 50141
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850011-2137
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750783/aaaacwci.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, STADIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, STADIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM: PANAMA: POSSIBLE UNFORTUNATE REPERCUSSION OF MIAMI HERALD STORY
TAGS: PFOR, PEPR, PM, PN, MIAMI HERALD
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006